

ESCHATON:

THE FINAL TESTAMENT

(OR HOW FAITH CONQUERED KNOWLEDGE)

A Play in Three Acts

by

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Synopsis - ESCHATON: The Final Testament - (or how Faith conquered Knowledge)

A contemporary Adam and Eve, along with an engaging devil, Luci, are commissioned by God to execute His plan to corral knowledge and return all earth's sinful souls to Eden - (or, more likely, for most of us, to hell). Luci agrees to His plan because she clearly sees much to gain from the destruction of knowledge.

The extraordinarily complex (and culture-specific) plan for destroying knowledge requires global cooperation and mind conditioning followed by infection of the entire world's populace by the ignorance virus (IV).

Luci's far-ranging surrogates and the elaborate technological system she finances ultimately works to rid mankind of knowledge - whereupon modern Adam and Eve receive a heavenly reward for their infamy.

Independent of this sinister drama, a young couple, Knowledge and Mary, meet, marry and pursue an idyllic, self-sacrificing life. They are the kernels of love, knowledge and beauty, intent on bringing peace and harmony to the world. Their role will prove critical to the overall narrative of the final reckoning as Knowledge, an atheist, becomes separated from Mary during the eschaton.

Several concessions on the part of God during the ascension ultimately results in rebellion among the hellions. In their righteous indignation, the intensifying ululation of the damned stokes fear among the pastoral inhabitants of the Elysian Fields and leads God to offer humanitarian reforms (a sort of celestial amnesty) to those condemned to the nether regions.

{In conducting His review, GOD came upon one particular agonized soul that pleaded to know the fate of her beloved, - KNOWLEDGE.

God winced. He had to explain to MARY that KNOWLEDGE had been relegated to hell - for the sin of...? - simply being the kernel of knowledge - and an unbeliever.

What MARY asked next shocked Him. Would He send her to hell to join her love? It meant that much to her simply to be with him - especially in his suffering.

GOD was almost moved to tears.

MARY: I conjured KNOWLEDGE instantly upon my arrival.

We were now both together in Hell - and we were happy.

We exchanged reminiscences of our earthly life. We detailed our celestial journeys for hours, days, ... Ethereal flowers seemed to bloom in the halo of the radiance from our innocent and unblemished ardor. Ours was undiluted love at its purest and most righteous. Our mutual joy transcended any discomfort our perilous surroundings might inflict on souls less intimately entwined.

Gradually, other hell-confined spirits began to take notice. They listened to the discourse of the lovers. They were moved. Tears of compassion began to mix with Hell's standard fare of tears of

pain. The aura of the requited love of the sweethearts seemed to serve as balm for some of Hell's collective pain and distress. 'Perhaps', some wags tweeted, 'love IS all you really need.' Hell was abuzz. The unaccustomed essence of Love began to permeate its foul air. As many hearkened to the simple colloquy between the lovers, virtual tears came to all who retained any sense of empathy and compassion. And, then, an intensifying groundswell of outrage.

'How could GOD have let this happen? He had unfairly consigned two of the most decent and virtuous people in the universe to hell.'

This was inexcusable. Even GOD should not be permitted to get away with such an unethical and flagrant violation of justice.

Moreover, if GOD had conspicuously erred in this judgment, what about His other referrals? The hellions believed an appeal to a higher court was in order.

LUCI: Before long, my clients in hell were in a feverish uproar. Seizing common cause with the reputedly 'unfairly' punished lovers, the residual billions of self-righteous condemned sinners quickly became agitated and unified with a growing passion for rebellion from that despotic GOD who had placed all of them, without just cause, they were certain, into my extraterrestrial penal colony.

They would demand their day in ...

They would appeal to ...

Who?

Hell's patrons smelled blood - and, for once, it was not their own. Their amalgamated fury intensified and, like the universe itself, inexorably continued to expand.

GOD: I had heard and was already being inconvenienced by Hell's cacophony. No sooner had I begun to fully enjoy the fawning and prayerful praise from Heaven's remaining sycophants - now that the last of the interlopers had been purged, - but the howls of Hell's enraged hordes was viscerally penetrating to the very core of my Paradise.

Eden's inhabitants were, first, startled, then, progressively, confused and upset by the rising din and caterwauling. My adoring fan base was becoming restless. Some even had the temerity to question whether something was amiss - or out of My control - in the Elysian Fields.

Meeting at this neutral site in Purgatory, LUCI and I, at first, agreed to simply let the furor die down. With time, we reasoned, Hell's revolutionary passion - and this unprecedented solidarity of the damned - would dissipate.

But, somehow, Hell's mutineers either sensed, or learned through Wikileaks, of our profane collaboration. Moreover, their tormentor's strategy seemed self-evident.

Accordingly, the condemned rabble labored to increase their ululation, synchronizing their combined resonation until My very firmament trembled.

The intensified vibrations of billions of Hell's full-throated banshees even threatened to 'break the waters'.

A heavenly tsunami was in the offing.

Meanwhile, Eden's agitated tenants were approaching full panic and starting to lose confidence - even, faith - in My ability to maintain serenity and provide them with eternally tranquil protection. As a result, Eden's seemingly passive predators were beginning to look alarmingly predaceous.

LUCI and I regarded each other with dismay. Before long, an irascible and impatient LUCI demanded urgent, concrete action to quell the instability in both our realms.

Under these circumstances, and on reflection, I felt inclined to make an accommodation. If LUCI would concur, I would moderate My condemnations of all the souls in Hell, precluding any further imposition of pain and suffering on them.

Of course, LUCI would continue to reign over Hell's domain, but she would inflict no further suffering, indignities or retributive punishments on Hell's residents.

It would be somewhat akin to a celestial amnesty.

Reluctantly, LUCI agreed, but not without exacting some territorial claims on My own domain. She would be granted perpetual dominion over that portion of the Garden that included My apple orchard.

Considering all the trouble this plot had already caused Me, I conceded this parcel.

Following amnesty and absolution, Hell began to take on quite a different aspect. Darkness receded. A range of color (besides, red) returned. Pervasive communal fear was gradually replaced by an inexplicable blend of relief and modest contentment.

The once-terrible appearance of Hell began to mellow into more pastoral and bucolic imagery. Even so, beginning in a halting and totally unforeseen fashion, an exodus from Heaven began.}

Ultimately, the touching reunion of devoted lovers and families willing to share pain and misery for the privilege of being united with their loved ones in a hell with a more agreeable climate results in an surprising depopulation of heaven.

The passion of reunited loved ones further moderates hell's climate, thereby radically undermining Luci's ability to impose heinous penalties and hardships. (This was not Luci's idea of hell.)

The passivation of hell leads Luci, in a fit of pique, to enforce '*primum frigidum*' (absolute zero; total destruction).

With hell quiescent and all the souls in the universe at eternal peace, our old adversaries, God and Luci, now without competitive domains to contend over, become united in wistful reminiscing and reverie, as they are left alone to share the remainder of eternity in the Elysian Fields.

Cast of Characters

<u>Zacharias Adam Goldman</u> (modern <u>ADAM</u>)	man in his 30s
<u>Sarah Evelyn Samuel</u> (modern <u>EVE</u>)	woman in her 30s
<u>LILITH</u> (snake in the Tree of Knowledge)	woman in her 40s
<u>GOD</u>	mature, bearded man
<u>LUCI</u> (Assertive, attractive female personification of the devil)	woman in her 40s
<u>KNOWLEDGE</u> (an engineering student)	man in his 20s
<u>MARY</u> (an art school student)	woman in her 20s
<u>JESUS</u>	33 year old man
<u>MARK TWAIN</u>	man in his 70s
<u>CHORUS</u> (Act I: Eden's animals; Act III: Hellions reciting 23 literary quotes related to life in hell; Act III, Scene 7, Hellions.)	

Locales

<u>Act I:</u>	<u>Scene 1:</u> Country Inn Motel room in Cincinnati.
	<u>Scene 2:</u> Creation Museum in Petersburg, Kentucky.
	<u>Scene 3:</u> The Garden of Eden.
	<u>Scene 4:</u> Eden: EVE propositions GOD.
<u>Act II:</u>	<u>Scene 1:</u> Wall Street, New York City
	<u>Scene 2:</u> ADAM's apartment, Central Park west.
	<u>Scene 3:</u> LUCI's apartment, Hell's Kitchen.
	<u>Scene 4:</u> ADAM's apartment, Central Park west.

Act III: Scene 1: Battery Park, New York City

Scene 1: A small village in Ghana

Scene 2: Dark Sewer Pipe - passageway to Hell.

Scene 3: Hell

Scene 4: The Garden of Eden

Scene 5: Hell

Scene 6: Purgatory

Scene 7: Hell & The Garden of Eden

Time

Act I: Several years ago.

Act II: Last few years leading to the Eschaton.

Act III: After the Eschaton; in order, Hell, Eden,
 Purgatory, Hell, and finally, Eden.

ACT IScene 1: (The Country Inn Motel)

SETTING

ADAM and EVE are seated at a table drinking coffee and reading motel literature. Their suitcases are open and belongings scattered about.

ADAM

(Standing and addressing the audience.)

We had just embarked on that idyllic stage of life commonly referred to as 'engagement'. We felt that our lives had begun to take on exciting new meanings as we dreamed of the unimaginable joys our future life together would bring.

The glow of self-awareness plus our progressive discovery of each other's intrinsic virtues grew with each passing day as we embarked on a journey toward the ultimate blending of our souls in holy matrimony.

EVE

(Seated, addressing the audience.)

Then, we decided to travel to Cincinnati.

The primary excuse for this excursion was to attend the Bar Mitzvah of my cousin, Tobiah.

Although a Jewish boy automatically becomes a Bar Mitzvah at 13-years-old, his was both a solemn and lavish celebratory event.

Normally a placid group, the entire group of my kinsfolk celebrated to the point of giddiness. However, after the Torah -- and some cash -- was passed, Adam and I began to feel a gnawing sense of deflation and, to a degree, even boredom.

ADAM

(Addressing the audience, then, sitting.)

Returning to our room at the Country Inn motel, we sorted through that series of brochures designed to offer visitors guidance to local attractions.

ADAM

(Addressing EVE, reading from a brochure)

Along with its *'home style decor, family friendly staff, complimentary breakfast, and free wireless'*, our Country Inn offers a *'packaged'* experience at a nearby museum.

Listen to this:

"The state-of-the-art 70,000 square foot museum brings the pages of the Bible to life, casting its characters and animals in dynamic form and placing them in familiar settings. Adam and Eve live in the Garden of Eden. Children play and dinosaurs roam near Eden's Rivers. The serpent coils cunningly in the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Majestic murals, great masterpieces brimming with pulsating colors and details, provide a backdrop for many of the settings."

EVE

(Taking and looking at the brochure)

They also promise to donate part of our room reservation back to the museum.

It's a little late in the day, but if we nab a nearby Uber.

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT IScene 2: (The Creation Museum)

SETTING: The Creation Museum. ADAM and EVE are at the cashier's carrell. purchasing tickets. LILITH is the ticket taker.

ADAM

(Addressing the audience, narrating)

We arrived at the Museum a few minutes after its 5 p.m. last admission. However, the kindly cashier, while collecting a \$120 fee, permitted us to enter with the caution that the doors would close at 6 p.m. Even then, the janitors were starting to sweep the corridors.

Virtually alone in the Museum, we walked briskly through the maze of meandering walkways, *'entering the era of the Bible and witnessing the true time line of the universe unfolding through its seven C's of History.'* As we paused, *'after delving into the belly of Noah's Ark where we listened to the sounds of thunderous, driving rains and the pounding of water against the sides of the great Ark.'*

I checked my iPhone.

ADAM (To EVE.)

6:17 p.m.?

EVE

(Addressing the audience.)

Alerted, we checked the hallways, then the windows, only to view a parking lot empty except for a brightly colored service truck. The animals in the petting zoo, including the dromedary camel, Gomer, had been returned to their stalls. Still, no reason to panic. We were together and we could take our time viewing one of the more compelling exhibits until we came across a custodian who would facilitate our exit.

We stopped to rest at a divergent point in the Garden diorama where exotic animals co-mingled and children played near Eden's rivers. It was a romantic spot, dark and

faintly luminous. We sat for a moment on the Styrofoam rocks, closed our eyes and embraced.

SETTING:

Our betrothed couple, ADAM & EVE, were wandering through a near empty Creation Museum just after its 6 p.m. closing. They stop by a pastoral garden depicting Eden. The couple chooses to rest on an accommodating 'boulder' near the verdant diorama. As they embrace, a **bright flash of light** wakes them from their reverie. They have been transported into Eden itself.

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE 2)

ACT IScene 3: (The Garden of Eden)

AFTER THE FLASH:

CHORUS appears, cloaked as large animals, they lie down on-stage. A seductive LILITH occupies a niche in a tree.

Opposite the tree is an empty chair and desk, with an Apple computer, which serves as GOD's workstation.

ADAM and EVE wander about Eden, occasionally reaching out to touch the passive animals with wonder and admiration.

EVE

(Animated; Addressing the audience.)

Suddenly, after a flash of light awoke us from our daydreams, we sensed motion and sound around us. Water flowed. Children made playful noises. Animals scratched, purred and snorted. There were also human figures, partially shrouded by foliage, but seemingly unadorned by civilized raiment.

Everything - and everyone - was vibrant and alive.

ADAM

(Addressing the audience.)

Adrenalized, but unabashed, we walked through GOD's fantastic Garden, occasionally stopping to pet the browsing dinosaurs and other terrestrial vertebrates. Delicious fruits and berries seemed plentiful. The waters were pure and cool. It was summertime, - and the living was easy.

EVE

(Addressing the audience.)

Days, weeks, perhaps months or years, passed. Who could tell? It was a timeless world. There were no timepieces, monthly credit card invoices or annual tax forms. No searching or shopping for essentials, such as toilet paper, was required. There were no shopping carts; no malls; no discount stores; no parking lots; no bicycle lanes.

The Garden was a blissfully unchanging world free of breaking news, intercollegiate sports, preemptive war, ethnic conflict, internecine strife, corrupt politics, computers, spam e-mail, social networking, Oscar-winning movies, television sitcoms, or, for that matter, buildings, houses, toilets, highways, billboards,...

It was also largely a world without words. There was really nothing much to say. All one needed to do was exist - under the beneficent, watchful protection of a loving GOD.

ADAM

(Addressing the audience while
EVE approaches the tree.)

One day, while gathering figs for lunch, EVE came upon a fruit-laden, but oddly isolated, tree. At its base was a chiseled stone tablet revealing that it was the *Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil*. It was surrounded by a ribbon of plastic yellow tape repeatedly warning 'Caution - Do Not Cross'. Apparently, this either did not apply to or did not deter the beguiling serpent who appeared to be comfortably ensconced in a crotch of the tree.

EVE

(Addressing the audience.)

Surprisingly, the serpent, a female named LILITH, was a very talkative creature. She seemed to speak with a hint of an Irish brogue which, as you know, can be both disarming and charming.

She was also an entertaining storyteller, spinning fables of how those who ate the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge went on to win Nobel Prizes and have incredibly satisfying sex lives, whatever that was.

ADAM

(Addressing the audience.)

I, for one, was not convinced by these fantasies, but I had some doubts about EVE's reactions. I couldn't be certain, but I thought that her nipples stiffened as the serpent waxed poetic over the sex lives of the apple-eaters. Clearly, EVE was not ashamed.

EVE

(Addressing the audience.)

Later, alone and intrigued by her provocative stories, I visited LILITH again, ostensibly to chat about female figure problems, including my inexplicable belly button. However, becoming ever more voluble and confidential, LILITH began telling me stories of an Early Eve whom she had urged to eat fruit from the Tree of Knowledge so that she might be more like GOD.

Early Eve not only ate, but exuberant with her new knowledge, rushed off to offer the fruit to her gardening helpmate.

EVE

(Mimicking LILITH's Brogue.)

To which LILITH added, *'And the eyes of the two of them were opened. And they really liked what they saw.'*

LILITH

(Explaining to EVE.)

Aware now of their nakedness, and not having access to rayon - or even cotton, Early Eve made coverings of fig leaves for them both.

When He happened by, not being up on the news, GOD asked them what they were doing. Early Adam pointed to Early Eve, and Early Eve pointed to me even though I don't even eat apples.

GOD was surprisingly upset. It appears that knowledge was His special domain. Once it became a commodity, a host of undeserving people would have access to knowledge -- all due to this one unauthorized transgression. He lamented that He never should have created the apple.

Blaming Early Eve above all, He then cursed all women with pain in childbirth. In addition, He then banished both of His sinful, fruit-loving farmhands from His garden. To add to their penalty -- as well as to avoid future rib resections, GOD promised that, in the future, 'the seed' would be passed through women or 'woman' as He put it.

GOD then posted a chubby cherub at the entrance to the Garden of Eden in order to block the transgressors way to

the Tree of Life, - "lest he put out his hand ... and eat, and live forever.

It turns out that posting the cherubim (with a fiery revolving sword) as tree guard was a far more effective strategy than the yellow ribbon and the warning tablet.

Nevertheless, it was too late. As GOD foretold, Early Adam did not live forever. He died after only 930 years.

However, in his brief lifespan, he and his Early Eve independently started creating new life to populate a whole new world.

EVE

(Confidentially, to ADAM)

The green serpent with her Irish brogue seems to be on to something. To create such a strong backlash from GOD, knowledge must not only be very useful, but it must truly impart Godlike powers.

ADAM

(Responding to Eve.)

But is the acquisition of this knowledge worth risking our carefree life in His Garden?

Might it be possible to obtain this fructose-induced knowledge without also falling from Grace and being banished from Eden?

(Addressing the audience.)

Despite my grave misgivings, EVE set about devising a plan. She - and I - would, first, attain our immortality by eating from the *Tree of Life*. This is a legally sanctioned move for Eden's residents.

Beyond that, EVE would try to persuade GOD that it is in His best interest to allow us or, at least, if I demurred, - her, - to obtain knowledge.

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE 3)

ACT IScene 4: (Eve Propositions God)

SETTING

GOD sits at His workstation as EVE warily approaches.

EVE

(Addressing the audience.)

It wasn't easy getting GOD's attention - what with His need to look after, and record, every action of every creature in the world - in real time.

Moreover, with the viral spread of the carnal, if not the intellectual, component of knowledge, matters were getting out of hand exponentially.

Just two millennia after Christ arrived to redirect its spread, Humans with knowledge (on earth alone) were doubling in numbers every half century. Assuming the Rapture was not called into play before then, Early Eve's global spawn was expected to exceed 9 billion by as early as 2050 A.D.

In light of the ever-intensifying burden thus placed upon Him, it wasn't hard to appreciate GOD's righteous anger towards the two miscreants whose egregious fructal sin started it all.

Therein lay the foundation for my stratagem. Amidst all the confusion and conflict in the universe, it was obvious to me that GOD, like Early Adam, needed a helpmate.

ADAM

(From afar, addressing the audience.)

... and EVE knew just the woman for the job.

GOD

(Addressing the audience.)

EVE began by showing Me a job description. On a secretarial level, My new helpmate would assist Me in keeping track of all the burgeoning human activities.

Strategically, My new assistant would design and direct a series of measures by which the knowledge humans had illicitly acquired could ultimately be dissipated so that

all My children could be returned to Paradise to enjoy a state of perpetual bliss in hallowed ignorance.

How? EVE didn't know. She hadn't yet tasted the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. But, when she was authorized to, she felt certain she could concoct a scheme to ensure that Eden's usurped regimen would be restored.

Selling her proposal to Me was far easier than she anticipated. By the time she finally encountered Me at My workstation, EVE learned that all My hard-drive storage capacities were nearly exhausted. I hadn't rested in ... well, a long time.

Along with being in danger of falling behind in cataloguing the moment-by-moment activities of all living creatures, the gossamer souls of the innocent casualties of Earth's wars and scourges were piling up in Purgatory.

Worse, since Limbo, that way-station to Hades, had been preemptively shut down by an overzealous Pope, everyone else was going straight to Hell.

EVE did not consider it blasphemy to profess that I was at My wit's end. Just as I had sought Early Adam's help in tending My Garden, she argued that I now needed enlightened, capable help in managing My external affairs. Moreover, if a strategy could be devised to induce the knowledge genie back into the apple, EVE would be worthy of My redemption on behalf of all women.

Well, except for Early Eve.

EVE

(Addressing the audience, with irritation.)

Being pleased with my proposal, GOD summoned, not me, but ADAM to His side. Destroying Knowledge, or anything for that matter, He declared, was a man's job. Accordingly, God would enfranchise ADAM to partake of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge as a precursor to His campaign to corral human knowledge and return the faithful to His fold.

Frantically, I tried to interject that GOD might conduct a broader personnel search, perhaps using a human resources director, only to learn that GOD despised those employed in personnel management above all other earthly miscreants.

ADAM was His man.

That very evening, ADAM returned to our bower carrying one of His magic apples. ADAM was exulted at the honor GOD had bestowed upon him even though he had not yet given any thought to what extinguishing knowledge among humanity might entail.

One bite was all it took. ADAM knew, and looked at me in a strangely unsettling way.

For my part, I was sorely discomfited. I had been discriminated against owing to my sex. Worse, my ideas had been expropriated.

Here I was in Paradise, no less - and I was unhappy.

If the respondent weren't GOD, I would have sued.

The moment ADAM retreated behind a bush to relieve himself, I seized the remains of the magic apple and gnawed at it until nothing but its seeds remained.

These, I secreted in a fig leaf for possible future use.

Upon swallowing, knowledge came to me rapidly.

Unexpectedly, I began to notice that Eden itself could be rather uncomfortable. I felt chilled. My surroundings smelled rank. Several insects were trying to draw blood from me. The dinosaurs suddenly looked terribly menacing. My hair was a disheveled mess.

And ADAM was smiling.

(A brief period of darkness. Janitor appears.)

ADAM

(Addressing the audience.)

It was dark, but we could hear the jingle of the approaching custodian's keys. It was almost as if we had never been away.

I used my iPhone to call for a taxicab.

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE 4.)

(END OF ACT I.)

ACT II

Scene 1 (Wall Street Office, NYC)

ADAM

(to EVE, while working in his
Wall Street office carrel,
next to Eve's.)

It seems like a dream. Did we really speak to and, ultimately,
contract with GOD to serve as His agents for undermining the
world's Knowledge? Did we pet dinosaurs and held conversations
with a talking snake? Who would listen to such an improbable
story without having us committed to the psychiatric ward at
Bellevue? Perhaps, we should just put these vivid imaginings
behind us and return to the chaos of our everyday working lives.

ADAM

(Adam's Apple rings. He reads to EVE.)

He says, "*I'm waiting.*"

EVE

(She repeats, incredulously, to ADAM.)

I'm waiting?

No amount of post-Paradisical rationalizing is going to negate
this nascent nightmare. We are on a mission from GOD.

But, we have no plan. We also don't have any financial
resources, influential allies or business cards. Most of all, we
have no plan. Couldn't GOD have foreseen this? Didn't He
recognize that we were manipulative frauds - with motivations
considerably less pure than Early Adam and Early Eve? Could GOD
be cuckolded a second time?

ADAM

(Responding to EVE.)

And why would we be GOD's improbable tools for herding the
world's populace back toward unquestioning faith, divine
ignorance and celestial redemption?

EVE

(Addressing the audience.)

Almost every workday at 11:40 a.m., ADAM and I joined in the marbled lobby and walked to the *Gristedes Chock Full o'Nuts* on Maiden Lane to purchase lunch. There, we would stand in a disordered queue three rows deep and shuffle forward until we approached the counter where we would order Kosher sandwiches and soft drinks. Thus provided, we carried our unbleached, brown lunch bags back to our office cafeteria and scurried to find seating at a table as it was being vacated.

Today was different.

Surprisingly, there was only one other customer waiting at the Chock Full o'Nuts when we arrived. Behind the glass-covered countertop, the white uniformed attendant smiled at us almost as if she recognized us from our innumerable previous luncheon forays. Later, neither of us could recall having seen or talked to her before. There was an unaccustomed quiet in the shop; a calm moment allowing for banter. I even had time to note our server's white Lucite corporate name tag. LUCI was animated and amusing as she scurried to fill our orders.

As we unwrapped our sandwiches back at our corporate cafeteria, I found a note folded into my unbleached napkin. Written in elaborate cursive on flame red paper, this clandestine message included an address, in Hell's Kitchen, no less.

I read the message to ADAM: "*I can help! Your friend, LUCI.*"

In a genuine panic, we awkwardly excused ourselves from work for the afternoon - and briskly descended into the Broadway-7th Avenue Local subway. We were both in a state of almost uncontrollable anxiety.

LUCI Knows? LUCI can help? Flame red paper? Hell's Kitchen? Was this a diabolical exemplification of demonic humor? Had GOD already forsaken us and consigned us to a heinous eternity within the frozen ninth level of Hell for our treachery and impotence?

Arriving at ADAM's apartment, we saw the telephone flashing. After the beep, LUCI's cheery voice emanated in tinny resonance from his AT&T answering machine. LUCI proposed to meet with us in her 543 West 49th Street kitchen, between 10th and 11th Avenues, that very evening. We were dumbstruck, terrified, discombobulated.

We agreed. No way in Hell.

ACT IIScene 2: (LUCI's Hell's Kitchen
Apartment)

ADAM

(Addressing the audience.)

Strangely, we felt even more terrified at the prospect of not following LUCI's directives. Adding to our alarm was EVE's observation that she thought LUCI spoke with a pronounced, lilting brogue strongly reminiscent of LILITH's.

We would hire a taxicab -- and pay the driver to wait.

The West 49th Street courtyard was lined with trash bags and cans emitting that odor New Yorkers associate with multi-day-old garbage. The rusty, galvanized, garbage can lids appeared to be crushed inward from having served as seating for the building superintendent and other idle attendants.

Inside the entryway, we encountered the odor of fermenting grapes which followed us up the stairwell to the second story.

At the landing, LUCI stood waiting at her open door.

EVE

(Addressing the audience.)

ADAM bravely entered first. A short hallway led, indeed, to the kitchen where an east-facing window provided a view of an adjacent brick wall but one meter distant. Floored with linoleum, the kitchen contained a wooden icebox; a potbellied, coal-burning stove; an old-fashioned kitchen table with four tattered vinyl-covered chairs; and a large, raised, enameled bathtub immediately adjacent to the sink in which an open water faucet ran continuously.

In addition to these bizarre circumstances, We were made still more uncomfortable by the premonition that we had just stepped back more than a half-century in time.

Alternately, LUCI was bright, cheerful, seemingly even playful, but businesslike. Without preamble, she pointed us to the chairs while explaining that she understood our situation. We were not to be anxious since she had formed an alliance, albeit unholy, with GOD. She had agreed to assist Him in implementing His program to conquer their common enemy, knowledge.

LUCI

(Addressing the audience.)

I informed my guests that GOD had stipulated that the three of us should work in concert.

I went on to explain, in my most reassuring tone, that I was entirely supportive of GOD's effort to mitigate the impact that knowledge continued to impose on humankind. Scientists, I pointed out, were constantly devising effective methods for combatting disease and improving both the quality and length of human life. I lamented the fact that, in so many respects, people were leading not only longer, but happier lives. Moreover, the iPad mini with Retina display, which had recently been introduced to the broad consumer market, would only further increase human access to 'content'. Knowledge was rampant and gaining momentum through electronic transport.

Finally, I noted with satisfaction that, if, as GOD had ordained, only the holy and GOD-fearing were enabled to return to Eden, then, a far, far greater number of soiled souls would soon be on their way to severely overpopulate and further aggravate undesirable conditions in Hell.

It was clearly a win-lose situation.

I glowed at the prospect.

EVE

(Complaining bitterly and privately to ADAM)

I resent LUCI's involvement in our quest. I fear and mistrust her. She has deceitful eyes. She is loud, aggressive, narcissistic, and verbose. She wastes water. Besides, who needs her help? Whose concept was this project anyway? What makes her think she could be more effective than us in devising an effective, but humane, means for attaining the eradication of knowledge? Worse, LUCI *is* a pretty woman. How come GOD hadn't selected a man for this task?

(Addressing the audience.)

As we walked back to the curb outside the tenement building, ADAM and I saw that our cab, and our \$50, was gone.

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE 2)

ACT II

Scene 3 (ADAM'S apartment -
Drafting a Blueprint for the Death
of Knowledge)

LUCI

(addressing the audience.)

Instinctively, I knew. as I strapped on my push-up bra for our strategy meeting that following morning, that ADAM would be easy to co-opt. Knowledge had left him, not so much with ideas, as with basic desires.

EVE, on the other hand, promised to be exasperatingly difficult and uncooperative. Among other things, she was likely to introduce unnecessary complexity into our planning; namely, the issue of morality. EVE was truly righteous and felt obligations to both GOD and humanity. She was maternal and peace-loving. EVE could substantially limit my range of preferred options for destroying knowledge.

Most of my most basic tools were, of course, devilishly inhumane. I invariably voted for idiots and warmongers and proudly displayed my NRA life membership pin.

CHORUS

Even her pet goldfish had died for lack of watering.

EVE

(addressing the audience.)

At ADAM'S well-appointed Central Park West apartment, we sat down to black coffee, bagels with cream cheese, and orange juice.

From the start, we agreed that the destruction of knowledge might take some time. Peremptorily, however, I rejected any consideration of those time-honored, but inhumane, population control measures threatened in the Book of Revelation.

In particular, three of the four horsemen of the apocalypse, Conquest, War, and Death, sounded very much alike to me.

As a traditional Jew, I particularly dislike what I view as the Christian vision of the coming apocalypse. It seems nasty, brutal and mean-spirited.

Knowledge, alone, is our target.

When knowledge is firmly vanquished, population, along with political and environmental issues, should begin to fade.

Meanwhile, ADAM was clearly admiring LUCI's cleavage. Three times, he hovered over her to pour orange juice.

Only I was counting.

ADAM's behavior was becoming an irritating distraction for me. Even so, his typically male response, I thought, might actually furnish a pivotal key to the development of a plan for the destruction of knowledge.

In short, porn.

LUCI

(addressing the audience.)

Even as EVE began to articulate her nascent thoughts, I was quick to join in to reinforce and extend her formulations. We were like-minded and in total agreement. GOD had chosen his warriors well.

I revealed that I could muster substantial resources to aid in the implementation of our conspiracy. Along with liquid financial assets, I, perhaps not surprisingly, held sway over a small army of compliant advertising executives, bankers, political figures, media personalities, and, for the most part, conservative journalists.

I explained that I also had obligated the favors of a major segment of the preachers, televangelists and most influential religious and political leaders throughout the world. Seemingly, in pursuit of their personal ambitions, these avid interpreters of GOD's and the people's will had all previously negotiated special, inscrutable arrangements with me.

CHORUS

(Addressing the audience, in sequence.)

As the plan evolved, the roles keyed to the special talents and influence of those indebted to LUCI fell into place. With the monetarily assured concurrence of world governments, they would coordinate the efforts of an influential cabal to create an *international communications organization network (ICON)*. This service would primarily be devoted to marketing pornography - in all its cryptic guises.

To facilitate its broad adoption, the ICON network's global programming would be distributed free to all.

Besides providing an unparalleled array of exciting and provocative entertainment, ICON's political programming would be designed to induce and exacerbate fears, generate mistrust in established authority, and project apocalyptic interpretations of emerging world events.

For the female demographic, there would be interludes of very soft core pornography along with the exploration of sexual phobias.

The ICON's network's most disquieting video content would both create and magnify the portrayals of terrorist threats. Horror and angst, combined with the ultimate promise of sexual gratification, would dominate ICON programming, thereby creating a divine driving force aimed at compelling viewers worldwide to seek sanctuary and satisfaction under GOD's benevolent protection.

Sex would capture the audience. Panic and fear would create the need for GOD's salvation.

In relatively short order, and with the technical assistance of redundant NASA engineers plus the purchased accommodations of complaisant governments, GOD's earthly acolytes would be able to arrange for the launching of several advanced communications satellites, including one strategically placed in polar orbit.

These communication satellites would serve to beam the ICON network's designated programming to all inhabited regions of the world using a variety of nominally separate news and entertainment sources, thus creating the illusion of intense internecine competition.

Unfettered by commercial breaks, censors, or advertisers insistent on product placement and face time, ICON's channels could provide continuous, unexpurgated content.

Sports channels would offer sports fans an unmatched medley of live sports events tailored to the provincial interests in each viewer's region.

Outcomes could even be adjusted to exacerbate rivalries, maximize dissension, and, more important, generate fear, hatred and, ultimately, despair.

Still other channels would target those most fervent religionists who revel in being alternately appalled and outraged at the content being viewed by the hedonistic devotees of the other porn-ridden channels,

- at least until their spouses had gone to bed.

In this manner, ICON's overall enterprise could be construed as *'balanced and fair'*.

ADAM

(Addressing the audience.)

And, awarded the role of production manager, I would oversee preparation of each 24-hour program guide with a connoisseur's eye.

As it devolved, our scheme for corralling knowledge fused into to just the four basic elements.

CHORUS (Air, Water, Earth, Fire)

(addressing the audience, sequentially.)

Air would involve utilization of global communication.

This would be achieved through the use of multimedia: television, radio, internet, smart phones, CD, DVD, beta VHS, ..., plus social media, the voices of influential sports and political figures, clergy, local pundits, regional dictators, provocateurs, and demagogues, ..., whatever means and whoever was available for the transmission of those messages that would capture the attention - and allow ICON to enter the fertile, pleasure-seeking minds - of the global populace.

Water would be contaminated with an infectious agent designed to, at the designated signal from ICON's satellites, trigger a knowledge-debilitating and, ultimately, fatal assault on the human brain.

Independently, LUCI proposed to recruit her most enterprising and compromised cadre of the world's foremost biological scientists to develop a genetically modified virus - one that she referred to as the '*ignorance virus (IV)*.'

The ignorance virus would be inserted into each human as part of her diabolical design for inactivating their ability to continue utilizing their ill-gotten knowledge.

MARY sharply recoiled at LUCI's scheme to develop a cruel and sadistic infectious agent, but Adam, enthused with this manly, Machiavellian approach, championed it. How cool?

Earth currently provided the sustenance for an estimated seven billion people - and almost that number of souls.

While the conspirators agreed that the earth, itself, should be preserved, they conjectured that its role as a habitat for humanity would likely end as soon as the masses, freshly liberated from knowledge, were fully ignoranticized.

It would then be up to GOD to redirect their spirits to the appropriate domain of His final judgment.

Some to Eden; most to Hell.

Fire? Well, LUCI will take care of that.

(FLAMEOUT)

(END OF SCENE 3.)

(END OF ACT II.)

ACT IIIA Catholic Marriage Blest in
Carnal Ignorance

Scene 1 (KNOWLEDGE, an engineering student, and MARY, an art student, plan their wedding and future.)

SETTING: Path in a park; KNOWLEDGE and MARY slowly walk into scene, hand in hand, finally settling together on a park bench. CHORUS describes their thoughts and plans.

CHORUS

(Addressing the audience, sequentially.)

Theirs was a traditional Irish Catholic wedding. It included green flowers, handfasting, and the exchange of Claddagh rings that consist of two hands holding a heart, with a crown on top. (In Irish legend, the crown represents loyalty, the hands indicate friendship, and the heart stands for the couple's love for each other.)

In addition to Jameson's Irish whiskey, the wedding celebrants imbibed mead made with honey (a practice thought to have spawned the term 'honeymoon', indicating the time the couple spends together after the wedding.)

The wedding feast consisted of corned beef, cabbage, potatoes and soda bread. Fruitcake, topped with whipped cream, was served for dessert.

By modern standards, the wedding was a comparatively modest affair. Mary chose to wear a bridal gown made of Irish linen that had been handed down from her maternal grandmother.

Her light red hair was simply braided. Plus, she eschewed many of the costly modern wedding rituals and adornments; opting, instead, for the long-held Irish traditions of carrying a lucky (in this case, ceramic) horseshoe and discretely embedding a '*magic handkerchief*' inside her floral bouquet. (Irish tradition held that this handkerchief would adorn the couple's first-born on its Christening day.)

All the guests were provided with small silver bells which they pealed throughout the ceremony. These would later be brought home and tinkled whenever a domestic dispute - obviously caused by evil spirits - needed to be disbelled. In this respect, the tiny bell served as an aural reminder of their wedding vows.

For his part, Knowledge was in disarray.

He offered no input - more particularly, no resistance - to any of the wedding plans. Largely out of fear of losing Mary's favor, he failed to remember to advise her about his own deeply imbedded beliefs - or what she might interpret as '*disbeliefs*'.

Knowledge trusted solely in clinical observation, undergirded by the scientific method, as the sole foundation for finding truth. The improbable, ancient, mythological practice of petitioning invisible deities to bestow fertility, good health, and eternal life, was incomprehensible to him.

He was in fear of telling Mary that he did not believe in her or, for that matter, anyone's God?

Compounding his deception by omission was Knowledge's virginal fear of impending intimacy.

Shy and lacking social graces, he had remarkably little experience in communicating with contemporary young women (a.k.a., girls).

Knowledge was deeply concerned that he could not fathom their thinking or effectively stimulate their emotions. Despite a deep attraction and fertile imagination, he was only dimly aware of their hidden anatomy. Whimsically, one could argue, he lacked - knowledge.

Nevertheless, despite painful ignorance and self-doubt, if all went well, Knowledge would soon find himself alone, abed, with a naked bride.

He had made an effort to prepare himself for this adventure. The very week that Knowledge became betrothed and purchased Mary's engagement ring, he also consulted Amazon and ordered a lightly used copy of the Kama Sutra.

On careful reading, Knowledge noted that, in addition to its written detailing of sixty-four sexual acts and positions, the manuscript also addressed a number of profound philosophical issues relating to the '*acquisition of knowledge*'.

His was also an illustrated edition.

The formal rituals completed and the guests both feted and sated, our freshly-minted married couple retreated to the bridal suite at the nearby Bowery Hotel.

Between themselves, in weeks to come, they would recall that first night together as both '*awkward*' and '*awesome*' as they diligently embarked upon a journey to develop their own mastery of carnal (in the most noble, spiritual, and practical sense of the word) knowledge.

"Practice ..." Well, you know.

Seeking adventure, our newly married couple would launch their careers together by volunteering for the Peace Corps. They were, ultimately, assigned to spend their first year developing a rural electrification project in post-genocidal Ghana.

Scene 2 (KNOWLEDGE and MARY;
project completed, the Peace Corps
volunteers, plan a vacation.)

SETTING: KNOWLEDGE and MARY are seated.

KNOWLEDGE

Now that the solar project is done, have you given any
thought to what might we do to celebrate our anniversary?

MARY

Well, since we have been granted a month's leave, I
thought we might take a trip to Italy - possibly, Rome -
or Siena. I would love to spend time sketching in their
venerable churches and the Tuscan countryside.

KNOWLEDGE

We might also spend some time in Florence visiting the
Galileo and Leonardo da Vinci museums.

MARY

We'll have to careful. Traveling in Italy will be very
expensive compared to Rwanda - and we haven't saved much.

KNOWLEDGE

We'll manage. - Besides, we have earned a proper
celebration.

SETTING: A **bright flash of light** startles
the couple. Alarmed, they jump up
and briskly move offstage as a red
darkness (Eschaton) descends.

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE 2)

ACT III

Scene 3 (ESCHATON: Ascent of the Damned. KNOWLEDGE climbs to hell.)

SETTING: Almost total darkness and haze.
Simulated sewer pipe through which
KNOWLEDGE is crawling and musing.

KNOWLEDGE

(Addressing the audience.while crawling.)

Instead of light, there was darkness. No sound could be heard and there was no tangible evidence that any other ethereal souls were, similarly, in transit. I felt alone and, in some fashion, naked. I had a vague sense that it was dank and chilly. In addition, I found I couldn't breathe.

Not that I had to.

Instead of the prophesied '*Golden Gate*', I sensed I was crawling along inside a cold, damp sewer. There was no light at the end of this tunnel. There was no heavenly '*bright white light*' to behold; no triumphant blare of angel's trumpets - nor even the distant reverberation of melodious harps. I could detect no sweet fragrance of holy myrrh, much less of burning gummy frankincense or Axe gel. Worst of all, there was no tender or consoling caress from MARY to comfort me. Instead, I experienced only a gnawing sense of foreboding.

What if there really is a GOD?

(Pauses, then continues crawling.)

What happened to my beloved MARY?

(KNOWLEDGE stops, stands erect, and
again addresses the audience, plaintively.)

Finally, sensing the presence of another spirit, I stopped and asked, wordlessly, "*Who are you?*"

JESUS

I am Jesus.

KNOWLEDGE

(Addressing the audience, astonished.)

This response both startled and elated me, but also gave me pause. What remained of my essence was immediately filled with wonder - and innumerable questions. Could it be that I remained capable of coherent thought or was this pneuma merely an illusion.

If any vestige of my heart had remained, I imagined it would have been pounding.

Somehow, somewhere, I was in contact with JESUS, the alleged Son of GOD.

JESUS

I am not really GOD's son.

In their fervor, the early religious novelists were infelicitous, confounding gospel with orchestrated, but socially and politically beneficial, fantasy. Not that it mattered. At the time, precious few could read. But that series of self-serving opportunists - Paul was, clearly, the worst - kept creating, embellishing and pimping a mythology that has since lasted for millennia. Worse, to continue enjoying the ambiance and freedom of Rome, some of these sycophantic charlatans even attempted to absolve those criminal bastards, the Romans, of my crucifixion.

Then, again, another pundit had me walking on water. Never happened. Anyway, what would that prove? ... that I couldn't swim?

On top of it all, to curry favor with the devout Jews awaiting the arrival of a messiah, anointed by God and physically descended from the Davidic line, one who would rule the united tribes of Israel and herald the Messianic Age of global peace also known as the '*World to Come*', another fraud concocted an incredibly implausible fabrication that moved my birthplace from Nazareth to Jerusalem.

He had me swaddled in an alien manger and visited by a gaggle of kings bearing gifts. In actuality, if I was really placed in a manger at birth, it would have been within our very own family hovel in our backwater homestead in Nazareth.

And, as far as I know, my only birth gift was goat's milk.

From all the hype, you would have also been taught to believe that I had shown exceptional moral insight plus a keenly-honed intellectual ability. In truth, I was just a simple, inordinately pious and devout Jew. Still, I like to think I was a compassionate person - at least, by the paltry standards of that savage and brutal time.

Sad to say, I was never schooled; couldn't read or write; spoke with a rustic twang; and had scavenged my preaching memes from John, the Baptizer. And like most common folk, aside from that baptism, I never bathed.

On top of all that, while I earnestly tried, I couldn't heal worth shit.

But then I didn't charge anything for my shamanism either.

However, I quickly learned that really sick people will come to you to try anything to regain some vestige of health - especially if the incantations are really, really mystical, impenetrable, - and free.

One thing that was written about me is sorta true.

I did rise from the dead - or, at least, appeared to.

What I think actually happened is ...

I had lost consciousness during my ordeal and hadn't fully expired during my crucifixion - when my ever-attendant camp followers promptly cut me down. They fussed and wailed over me until I surprisingly revived and could stand and move about. However, after a few days, infection set in and I went down for the count.

The whole grisly episode made grist for a really grand exit story in which I was pronounced to have been catapulted into heaven.

KNOWLEDGE

Are we in heaven, now?

JESUS

Didn't you understand what I just told you?

We are both in hell.

KNOWLEDGE

I thought I should end up here if such a place existed, but why are you here?

JESUS

My whole family; all my relatives: parents, brothers,
sisters, - all - have been consigned to this darkness.

KNOWLEDGE

... but GOD, your Father? ...

JESUS

My mother recalls being disturbed by a very old, white-
bearded man one night when she was yet a girl, but he
seemed to be without seed. Besides which, everyone says I
have Joseph's nose.

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE 3)

ACT IIIScene 4 (A Chat with the Devil)

SETTING: Hell, with reddish backlighting, black styrofoam boulders, steam from a fissure. KNOWLEDGE, CHORUS, MARK TWAIN mill around onstage - exhibiting modest discomfort.

KNOWLEDGE

(Addressing the audience, tentatively.)
But, what, exactly, is hell? Where was the 'fire and brimstone'? I still couldn't sense anything but the presence of other vague presences. I imagined I heard thoughts. I speculated on who might be in hell with me.
I imagined Mark Twain.

MARK TWAIN

A new arrival? Nice to meet you! I think that, despite some discomfort, you might find you even like it here.
All the most intriguing people who ever lived have taken up residence in hell - and, needless to say, they have plenty of time to visit and chat. All you gotta do is think of them and ...

KNOWLEDGE

I can visit with anyone here - just as if they are on my cell phone?

MARK TWAIN

Just so! - only there is no FaceTime here since no one has any tangible senses remaining.
Personally, I have found hell to be a rather pleasant place in many respects. Even my dog is here.

KNOWLEDGE

(Addressing the audience, more confidently.)
I went on to contact many of my favorite people: family, friends, inspirational heroes, great scientists and writers, sports and screen idols... All those I conjured

were here. They were interesting, outspoken and uninhibited. Most of their worldly posturing and pretense had been left behind.

Nevertheless, I mourned. The most important person in my life, MARY, was the only one I had repeatedly been unable to contact midst my hellish reveries.

Where was MARY? Had she ascended to heaven? Or was she still among those living on that monstrous scene of carnage and devastation that now encompassed earth's residuals?

I decided to try a radical approach. I would conjure my evil nemesis, LUCI.

LUCI

Good to have you here. You are a particularly fortuitous addition to my realm.

KNOWLEDGE

Would you answer some questions for me?

LUCI

Sure! I will enjoy disabusing you of your idealistic and romantic fantasies.

KNOWLEDGE

First of all, Where is MARY?

LUCI

I don't know. - Next!

KNOWLEDGE

I don't believe you!

LUCI

She's not here - and I haven't looked for her elsewhere. It is that simple. If she were here, you would have successfully contacted her yourself since hell dwellers enjoy full '*spirit access neutrality*' at no extra charge.

I might add, that I am inordinately busy now that the essences of most of humanity have descended into my province. By latest count, hell has recruited virtually all of the seven billion, - one might call them, '*souls*', - as

part of our disproportionate harvest of earth's sentient life.

Currently, I am sorting all these '*soular residuals*' into three levels. While I am very fond of Dante's concept of the nine circles of hell, I have decided nine is too many to administer with appropriate degrees of savagery and cruelty, so I have consolidated my domain into just three. My basement (toilet) level contains all those I never want to see, think about, or hear of again. As Dante admonished, '*Lasciate ogne speranza, voi ch'intrate*', (*Abandon all hope, ye who enter here.*)

Middle Hell is populated with the great multitude of ordinary sinners, most of whom never recognized - or acknowledged - that they were sinners at all - even after being confronted with their miserable voting records.

Personally, I prefer to spend most of my spare time in Hell's Limbo which is a relatively quiet and, I believe, tenable place. It has the least moaning and complaining about the climate.

As a virtuous pagan, that is where you have been consigned.

I provide no escape from Limbo Hell, but many entrained in this region might argue that residence here is far preferable to spending a boring eternity browsing - aimlessly and brainlessly - in a mindless Eden.

KNOWLEDGE

(Addressing the audience, with regret.)

I was dispirited, my query unanswered, '*What had happened to my love?*'

At least, she was not in Hell.

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE 4)

ACT IIIScene 5 (ADAM and EVE Repatriated)

SETTING: The Garden of Eden, green&verdant.
 LILITH is curled up. in the Tree
 of Knowledge; ADAM and EVE enter.

ADAM

(Addressing the audience, earnestly.)

GOD was pleased.

EVE, LUCI, and I had faithfully executed His initiative to corral and recapture all the knowledge of good and evil that had gone astray.

Most of the world's sentient souls, as weightless as Higg's bosons and elusive as dark matter, were now safely confined in Hell, while a fleet of articulated omnibuses filled with truly passionate God-fearing sycophants had been transported to the Elysian Fields.

And even though we were clearly unworthy sinners, the agents of His assault on knowledge, we would be delivered of His promised rewards and be returned to His Garden.

We followed the verdant path.

Just as we remembered, there it was, - the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Again, LILITH was comfortably and beguilingly entwined in its branches.

LILITH

Welcome back to the Garden. How did you enjoy your term of banishment in GOD's earthly underworld?

EVE (scathingly)

How is it that GOD puts up with you - allowing you to continue to dwell in his special tree and proselytize among his chosen to promote rebellion and mutiny?

LILITH

It seems you have retained a degree of sinful cynicism.
Can it be that you still possess knowledge?

EVE

(Drawing ADAM away to a secluded and,
she hoped, private spot.)

I hate this place. We have to get away from here as soon
as ...

EVE

(Addressing the audience, intently.)

We recognized that it was our own fault. We had labored
diligently and enthusiastically, even aligning with evil
forces, to destroy knowledge on earth. In the process, we
had brought quietus to billions of humans most of whose
residual essences had now been transported to hell.

Just as bad, we had delivered the world's most pitiable,
senseless, and gullible human souls to an intellectual
wasteland where their only consolation, if they could have
even perceived it, would be that they were no longer
capable of recognizing their own state of slavery and loss
of reason.

If anyone, we should be among those rotting in hell along
with the multitudes we had betrayed.

Oddly and penitently, ADAM and I both agreed.

We would petition GOD to be cast into hell.

(Pause in the narrative as
MARY and CHORUS come to the stage.)

ADAM

(Addressing the audience, with resignation.)

It was not hard to persuade GOD to send us both to hell.
God realized that he had violated His very own sacred
principles in sanctioning any evildoers, even those He had
Himself commissioned, to return to Eden - effectively as a
reward for the resounding success of their iniquities.

Annoyed with Himself, and as part of our shipment to hell,
GOD decided to further clean house by more extreme vetting.
A critical review of each of Eden's inmates revealed that,
in the turbulence of the massive global influx, He was
harboring some interlopers who were, in retrospect, clearly
unworthy of occupying His Heavenly sanctuary.

EVE

(Addressing the audience, narrating.)

In conducting His review, GOD came upon one particular agonized soul that pleaded to know the fate of her beloved, - KNOWLEDGE.

God winced. He had to explain to MARY that KNOWLEDGE had been relegated to hell - for the sin of...? - simply being the kernel of knowledge - and an unbeliever.

ADAM

GOD, especially, realized that this was hardly an honorable excuse for such a cruel and unfair judgment on His part. KNOWLEDGE had shown himself to be a decent, hard-working, compassionate person. He had led an exemplary life.

EVE

What MARY asked next shocked Him. Would He send her to hell to join her love? It meant that much to her simply to be with him - especially in his suffering.

GOD was almost moved to tears.

ADAM

Embarrassed, GOD sent all His culls, as well as MARY, to hell.

He felt He could not bear to face her in Eden forever.

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE 5)

ACT III

Scene 6 (KNOWLEDGE and MARY are reunited in Hell.)

SETTING: Hell, a glowing red background.
MARY and KNOWLEDGE sit on a rugged boulder, embracing. CHORUS, LUCI, LILITH, are onstage at a distance.

MARY

(Addressing the audience, emotionally.)

I conjured KNOWLEDGE instantly upon my arrival.

We were now both together in Hell - and we were happy.

We exchanged reminiscences of our earthly life. We detailed our celestial journeys for hours, days, ...

Ethereal flowers seemed to bloom in the halo of the radiance from our innocent and unblemished ardor. Ours was undiluted love at its purest and most righteous. Our mutual joy transcended any discomfort our perilous surroundings might inflict on souls less intimately entwined.

Chorus

(Addressing the audience, sequentially.)

Gradually, other hell-confined spirits began to take notice. They listened to the discourse of the lovers. They were moved.

Tears of compassion began to mix with Hell's standard fare of tears of pain. The aura of the requited love of the sweethearts seemed to serve as balm for some of Hell's collective pain and distress.

'Perhaps', some wags tweeted, 'love IS all you really need.'

Hell was abuzz. The unaccustomed essence of Love began to permeate its foul air. As many hearkened to the simple colloquy between the lovers, virtual tears came to all who retained any sense of empathy and compassion.

And, then, an intensifying groundswell of outrage.

'How could GOD have let this happen? He had unfairly consigned two of the most decent and virtuous people in the universe to hell.'

This was inexcusable. Even GOD should not be permitted to get away with such an unethical and flagrant violation of justice.

Moreover, if GOD had conspicuously erred in this judgment, what about His other referrals? We hellions believed an appeal to a higher court was in order.

LUCI

(Addressing the audience, angrily.)

Before long, my clients in hell were in a feverish uproar. Seizing common cause with the reputedly '*unfairly*' punished lovers, the residual billions of self-righteous condemned sinners quickly became agitated and unified with a growing passion for rebellion from that despotic GOD who had placed all of them, without just cause, they were certain, into my extraterrestrial penal colony.

They would demand their day in ...

They would appeal to ...

Who?

LILITH

Hell's patrons smelled blood - and, for once, it was not their own. Their amalgamated fury intensified and, like the universe itself, inexorably continued to expand.

LUCI

In anger and desperation, I decided to accost GOD. After all, His actions had precipitated this revolution. He should be called upon to acknowledge, confront, and mitigate it.

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE 6)

ACT IIIScene 7 (A Summit in Purgatory)

SETTING: Purgatory, grey, nondescript.
 GOD and LUCI are seated on plastic chairs at a card table. CHORUS wonders aimlessly, wordlessly.

GOD

(Addressing the audience, reassuringly.)

I had heard and was already being inconvenienced by Hell's cacophony. No sooner had I begun to fully enjoy the fawning and prayerful praise from Heaven's remaining sycophants - now that the last of the interlopers had been purged, - but the howls of Hell's enraged hordes was viscerally penetrating to the very core of my Paradise.

Eden's inhabitants were, first, startled, then, progressively, confused and upset by the rising din and caterwauling. My adoring fan base was becoming restless. Some even had the temerity to question whether something was amiss - or out of My control - in the Elysian Fields.

(After a pause, GOD continues.)

Meeting at this neutral site in Purgatory, LUCI and I, at first, agreed to simply let the furor die down. With time, we reasoned, Hell's revolutionary passion - and this unprecedented solidarity of the damned - would dissipate.

But, somehow, Hell's mutineers either sensed, or learned through Wikileaks, of our profane collaboration. Moreover, their tormentor's strategy seemed self-evident.

Accordingly, the condemned rabble labored to increase their ululation, synchronizing their combined resonation until My very firmament trembled.

The intensified vibrations of billions of Hell's full-throated banshees even threatened to '*break the waters*'.

A heavenly tsunami was in the offing.

CHORUS

*"Then shall the lame man leap as an hart,
and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the
wilderness shall waters break out, and
streams in the desert."*

GOD

Meanwhile, Eden's agitated tenants were approaching full panic and starting to lose confidence - even, faith - in My ability to maintain serenity and provide them with eternally tranquil protection. As a result, Eden's seemingly passive predators were beginning to look alarmingly predaceous.

LUCI and I regarded each other with dismay. Before long, an irascible and impatient LUCI demanded urgent, concrete action to quell the instability in both our realms.

Under these circumstances, and on reflection, I felt inclined to make an accommodation. After all, as everyone knows, I am a merciful and forgiving GOD. If LUCI would concur, I would moderate My condemnations of all the souls in Hell, precluding any further imposition of pain and suffering on them.

Of course, LUCI would continue to reign over Hell's domain, but she would inflict no further suffering, indignities or retributive punishments on Hell's residents.

It would be somewhat akin to a celestial amnesty.

Reluctantly, LUCI agreed, but not without exacting some territorial claims on My own domain. She would be granted perpetual dominion over that portion of the Garden that included My apple orchard.

Considering all the trouble this plot had already caused Me, I conceded this parcel.

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE 7)

ACT III

Scene 8 "The Path to Paradise
begins in Hell" - Dante

SETTING: Hell, with a pastoral background.
CHORUS, LILITH, LUCI, GOD onstage.

LILITH

(Addressing the audience, cheerily.)

Following amnesty and absolution, Hell began to take on quite a different aspect. Darkness receded. A range of color (besides, red) returned. Pervasive communal fear was gradually replaced by an inexplicable blend of relief and modest contentment.

In many metaphysical respects, Hell began to resemble Eden, except for the absence of dinosaurs, fearsome wild beasts and perpetually-praying, passive petitioners.

The once-terrible appearance of Hell began to mellow into more pastoral and bucolic imagery.

But there were important differences, too. There were a lot of souls in Hell. Despite their vanishingly low density, the netherworld could be considered quite crowded. Accordingly, Hell's newly enfranchised populace began to reorganize themselves in an effort to ease accommodations.

A degree of organization was possible in Hell because many of the hellions, as they referred to themselves, remained sentient. They could think. Hell's engineers, scientists, politicians and bureaucrats were still capable of planning. As a result, some of their number began to develop protocols for prodding Hell's interneers toward a more equitable and tranquil sharing of the ethereal resources of their overpopulated netherworld.

There could even be waste collection and sanitary disposal - in the event any tangible solid waste was generated.

Death, even in mortal sin, had become, - not only, less forbidding - but, somewhat more convivial.

Accordingly, the din subsided to a gentle thrumming. Still, among the murmur of those that had been granted GOD's

dispensation from pain and torture could be heard some renowned, if still fairly insolent, voices.

CHORUS

(Addressing the audience, sequentially.)

"Let this hell be our heaven." Richard Matheson, What Dreams May Come

"I would prefer an intelligent hell to a stupid paradise." Blaise Pascal and Victor Hugo

... whatever the tortures of hell, I think the boredom of heaven would be even worse." Isaac Asimov

"A fool's paradise is a wise man's hell." Thomas Fuller

"You won't burn in hell. But be nice anyway." Ricky Gervais

"I don't like to commit myself about Heaven and Hell, you see, I have friends in both places." Mark Twain

"Hell is just a frame of mind." Christopher Marlowe

"So this is hell. I'd never have believed it. You remember all we were told about the torture-chambers, the fire and brimstone, the "burning marl." Old wives' tales!" Jean-Paul Sartre

"The mind is a universe and can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven." John Milton

*"Once I was free in the shackles of sin:
Free to be tempted, just bound to give in;
Free to be captive to any desire;
Free to eternally burn in hell's fire.
'Til Someone bought me and called me His slave:
Bound by commands I am free to obey;
Captive by beauty I'm free to adore—
Sentenced to sit at His feet evermore."
John MacArthur*

"No, there are no special places in hell. Hell is a democracy." Mike Carey

"Hell is paved with good intentions." Samuel Johnson

"Heaven and Hell make no sense if the majority of humans are a complex mixture of good and evil. There's no reason to receive a reward if you're 57/43. Why sit around forever in an elevated version of Club Med?" Norman Mailer

"Hell is full of musical amateurs: music is the brandy of the damned. May not one lost soul be permitted to abstain?" George Bernard Shaw

"To rule by fettering the mind through fear of punishment in another world, is just as base as to use force. Reserve your right to think, for even to think wrongly is better than not to think at all." Hypatia

"Written over the gate here are the words 'Leave every hope behind, ye who enter.' Only think what a relief that is! For what is hope? A form of moral responsibility. Here there is no hope, and consequently no duty, no work, nothing to be gained by praying, nothing to be lost by doing what you like. Hell, in short is a place where you have nothing to do but amuse yourself." George B. Shaw

"Hell will be Heaven with Friends, Heaven will be Hell without them." Aman Jassal

"In monasteries, seminaries, retreats and synagogues, they fear hell and seek paradise. Those who know the mysteries of God never let that seed be planted in their souls." Omar Khayyam

"The possibility of paradise hovers on the cusp of coming into being, so much so that it takes powerful forces to keep such a paradise at bay. If paradise now arises in hell, it's because in the suspension of the usual order and the failure of most systems, we are free to live and act another way." Rebecca Solnit

"Eternal peace is hell for the adventurers." Toba Beta

"Hierarchies are celestial. In hell all are equal." Nicolás Gómez Dávila

"Heaven without love : what a hell. (Paradis sans amour : voilà ce qu'est l'enfer)" Charles de Leusse

"Take her head upon your knee; Say to her, "My dear, my dear, It is not so dreadful here." Edna St. Vincent Millay

LILITH

(Addressing the audience, with irony.)

Despite a network of electronic firewalls and spam filters to preclude intergalactic communications, there appeared to be some unsanctioned crosstalk between Heaven and Hell.

Through this breach, an assortment of the smug, self-satisfied adorers of God in Heaven had discovered that the damned souls in Hell were no longer being subjected to pain and misery. Worse, some of Hell's condemned sinners were reputed to be happy.

This being the case, why had Eden's saintly gone to all the trouble of remaining virtuous throughout their lives?

The promised pitiless and unending penalties of Hell were a major motivation for these chosen to remained faithful to an invisible and unresponsive GOD - and, for a handful of devotees, to remain celibate as well.

To further curry favor with GOD and ensure their entry to Paradise, many true believers had steadfastly repudiated logic - and resisted subscribing to advances in technology and science, - particularly whenever it conflicted with - or worse, refuted - their biblical mythologies.

A surprising proportion of devout Paridisians had, similarly, uncritically renounced all the inconvenient scientific truths aggregated by Al Gore, even going so far as to lend credence - even repute - to Senator James Imhofe's (Republican, Oklahoma) exposé of the '*the second-largest hoax ever played on the American people, - after the separation of church and state.*'

Jimmy's target was the frighteningly un-Biblical concept of anthropogenically induced global warming.

Intellectual - and scientific - advisor to the faithful and credulous, *'Mountain Jim'* ignored the existence and use of the thermometer as well as orbiting satellites as he revealed to the credulous that:

'no meaningful warming has occurred in the last century.'

'as long as the earth remains there will be seed time and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, day and night.' Genesis 8:22

If choosing to willingly subscribe to such Imhofian improbabilities - and other impossibilities - did not bring them heavenly reward and, further, distinctly separate them from the unrepentant and unworthy sinners on earth who, they were promised, would endure eternal torture in Hell, what was their pious denial good for?

Had their life-long physical and intellectual sacrifices not really been worthwhile? Might they just as well have accepted all those benefits that science had offered, fully utilized their Apple-fueled intellect - and, ultimately, - entered Club Hell themselves?

Celestial Amnesty was leading to dissension in Heaven.

LUCI

(Advising the audience.)

It was a one-way trip!

Heaven's elect could be consigned - or, in some cases, allowed - to dwell among the derelict Hellions, whereas any uplift to God's sacred province was strictly prohibited.

Even so, beginning in a halting and totally unforeseen fashion, an exodus from Heaven began.

For most of the migrants, their migration was motivated by an intense, innate desire to be reunited with their families and loved ones.

Many, just as MARY, had found that Paradise could be a terribly lonely place without the solace and peace-of-mind that comes only from being close to those with whom one has shared life, love, and, - yes, - even pain.

And now that Hell was, reputedly, virtually free of pain and punishment, what did they have to lose?

LILITH

GOD was mortified. How could this be happening? Didn't the once-in-a-deathtime opportunity for His chosen few to spend an eternity next to Him, so that He could hear and revel in their praise, trump any residual earthly social and familial encumbrances?

Apparently not.

The trickle grew into a rivulet; then, an outpour. The Garden's select population, never very large owing to GOD's stringent criteria for admission, was diminishing to the point of impending labor shortages. It was reaching the extremity where even some of His angels had to put down their lutes in order to spend time cultivating and weeding.

GOD imagined His glory fading.

LUCI

One would have thought that I would be enthralled. After all, the way things were evolving in Heaven, Hell would soon encompass essentially all the spirits in the entire universe.

But what to do with this unproductive collection of vapors?

The reasons for the escalating defections from Zion embodied my problem. Partly, I had capacity and management issues; but, mostly, it was Hell's unbridled spirit of jubilation created by repatriation and reunion.

Hell was not only becoming a somewhat desirable destination where kindred souls reconnected; it was

becoming both a sought-after haven and a celestial refuge from intellectual captivity and eternal boredom.

Having reluctantly given up my franchise to impose and supervise pain and suffering, this turn of events did not mesh with my concept of either improvement or empowerment.

This was not my idea of Hell!

Make no mistake, I am not above abrogating my agreement - unilaterally.

(LUCI, after a pause where she paces the stage and appears to issue commands to underlings, returns to address the audience, resolutely.)

I could still control Hell's climate - or, in this case, its perceived temperature.

So, in raw - and righteous - anger, I elected to completely turn off the heat.

It seemingly took only moments for intergalactic space weather conditions to become established. Atomic and molecular vibrations and related oscillations diminished to a virtual standstill. Ethereal communications slowed; then, ceased. No complaints were heard because no pulsations or reverberations could be perceived at any frequency.

It was as if death, in its ultimate darkness, had finally come to the whole of the universe's vast population. All Hell had become a void of soundless and illimitable dark matter. Zero degrees Kelvin (and Rankine) had finally been achieved.

Primum frigidum. It was irreversible.

All was quiet now.

(After a pause, LUCI resumes, plaintively.)

I immediately became bored. Impulsively, in my rage, I had ceded rule of my once powerful and violent domain to a great nothingness. My very *raison d'être* could no longer be justified.

Even new recruits, if there were still any to be had, would have no substantive Hell to dwell in.

Death had become, - simply, - death.

GOD

(Addressing the audience, with resignation.)

LUCI would normally have foreseen this. However, in her fury, she had acted without forethought in imposing the 'nuclear cold' sanction - and it had resulted in her voiding the Universe of its most renowned - and feared - destination for the damned.

Still, she would not - or, perhaps, at this terminal point, could not - back down. Even if it might have been possible for her to muster the universe's electrochemical resources and aggregate the enormous energy cache required to restore her province, her pride precluded her giving Hell's rebels the satisfaction of seeing her flail against her self-inflicted misadventure.

Growing ever more upset, irritated, and restless, LUCI would visit Me to see how things were going in Heaven.

I dropped My hoe and welcomed the distraction.

Since My amnesty, followed by the exodus, I had lost much of My heavenly labor force. I now spent much of My time doing routine chores in My Garden.

There was little for Me to do with no one to watch over on an earthly underworld now bereft of human life. Just as LUCI, I felt the unfamiliar weight of boredom now that there was so little call for use of My Godly powers in the cosmos.

LUCI and I spoke of old times. Unabashedly, we revealed, recounted, and lamented the mistakes we had both made. Sometimes, we quipped, we had acted almost as if we were human.

LILITH

(Addressing the audience, with good humor.)

The old adversaries chuckled at the many ruses they had devised to undermine one another's influence in the yin and yang of their struggle for humanity's souls - plus their many rivalries for recruitment of essences for their competing afterworlds.

Perhaps, they could now be cosmic friends - spiritual equals - in a universe that no longer required - or accommodated - conflict between good and evil.

LUCI and GOD fashioned an arrangement.

Since LUCI had no residual 'home' to which to return or celestial prison to dominate, She would need an alternative dwelling place. She reminded GOD of His pledge to cede His orchard to Her. LUCI would set up Her celestial residence in the Garden, alongside GOD. They would regale each other with tales of former glories -

CHORUS

and atrocities.

LILITH

They would provide diversions and keep each other company.

LUCI could be an entertaining and, without hell to administer, a whimsical and mildly compassionate Devil.

At this juncture, the erstwhile adversaries could erase their enmity, cease their incessant pursuit of dominance, relax their tensions, and enjoy an eternity of peace and quiet together.

Why not?

Theirs was a marriage made in Heaven.

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE 8)

(END OF PLAY)